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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Amishi Castelli, Ph.D.  
Environmental Protection Specialist  
Office of Railroad Policy and Development/USDOT  
Federal Railroad Administration  
One Bowling Green  
Suite 429  
New York, NY 10004

Mr. RJ Palladino AICP, PP  
Senior Program Manager  
NJ TRANSIT Capital Planning  
One Penn Plaza East, 8th Floor  
Newark, NJ 07105

Dear Dr. Castelli and Mr. Palladino:

The National Association of Railroad Passengers, which represents the tens of thousands of rail passengers who pass through the Hudson tunnels each day as well as tens of millions of fare-paying rail passengers nationwide, appreciates the opportunity to share our vocal support for the Hudson Tunnel Project and for fast-tracking any necessary approvals.

Each day the Hudson tunnels carry a staggering 24,000 riders on 100 Amtrak trains, plus 90,000 weekday riders on 350 NJ Transit trains. Nearly 30% of Amtrak's national annual ridership passes through these tunnels. Not only does this make these tunnels a vital link in the national network, but also a fragile "single point-of-failure" whose neglect carries consequences for the entire U.S. economy. Given the importance of these tunnels to the entire East Coast transportation system and to passenger rail, NARP strongly urges the government to proceed as expeditiously as possible, within the confines of applicable law, to begin desperately needed and long-overdue construction of new tunnels.

We agree with Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) that this is the most important infrastructure project in the greater New York region in decades. But the tunnels' outsize importance to the entire East Coast, and by extension the national rail network, also makes this effort truly a project of national significance. And more worrisome, the already significant risk of serious disruption is growing with every passing day.

Amtrak currently removes one of the two tunnels from service each weekend just for continuing maintenance, resulting in slow, single-tracking operations. Amtrak told us that until new ones are built, this will continue indefinitely. After new tunnels are built, each of the current tubes will be removed from service for a full year for complete rehabilitation. There is a real danger that if one of the current bores becomes permanently damaged or disabled, the throughput of trains would fall some 75%. Last year New York Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) described the situation as a potential "transportation Armageddon."

Separating the Hudson Tunnels project from the larger Gateway project helps ease the funding burden, simplifies permitting and design and, crucially, helps to secure the widest possible agreement to proceed from elected and

appointed officials throughout the region – agreement that had been elusive for many years. Anything that jeopardizes long-awaited progress, including the expedited environmental review supported by the New Jersey congressional delegation and Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx, could increase the risk of transportation meltdown. That in turn could lead to grave economic consequences and a greater reliance on less environmentally responsible transportation modes.

Accordingly, NARP supports rapid consideration and expedited approval of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Hudson Tunnels Project, and rejects any “No Action (No Build) Alternative” as irresponsible, economically risky and potentially hazardous to passengers using the tunnels each day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Mathews", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Jim Mathews  
President & CEO

